

SCRUTINY PROJECT BRIEF

Scrutiny Project Brief for Review of:

BELLENDEN RENEWAL AREA – EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS

Date(s) of consideration:

10 November 2004, 7 December 2004 and 25 January 2005.

Why is the Committee doing this?

In 2004, the scrutiny team were approached by Eileen Conn from Bellenden Resident's Group (BRG), suggesting a scrutiny into the Bellenden Renewal. The basis for the suggestion was that although the scheme had worked in a broad sense and some aspects of the scheme had been very successful, there had been some issues along the way.

Issues identified by the BRG related to community involvement in mixed tenure schemes, quality and organisation of the work, and communication with residents. The BRG believes that the 'people' side of the renewal has been inadequate and this had impacted on community development in the area.

It would be useful to ensure that any lessons from the Bellenden experience have been identified, as they will be relevant to both private sector renewal work and wider regeneration work across the borough.

Background

The Bellenden area was recognised as a priority area for renewal following a lengthy neighbourhood renewal assessment in 1996. This study found that of the 3,324 properties, 78% were privately owned, 84% were in disrepair, 606 were classified as unfit for human habitation and 34% of households were eligible for a means-tested benefit.

In July 1997, Bellenden embarked on a 10 year renewal scheme which aimed to improve housing (council and privately owned), social and environmental issues in partnership with local stakeholders and residents. Actions ranged from bringing homes up to a standard fit for human habitation, to making improvements to shopping areas, green spaces and traffic management. Grant aid and group repair were identified as the key funding tools to assist in the renewal.

A number of positive improvements have been seen in the area since the renewal scheme began. For example, to focus on housing: in 2002 564 properties had been made fit for human habitation or brought up to a standard of reasonable repair, and 574 properties had benefited from energy efficiency measures. In 2000 the council won an

award for 'Local Authority that has done the most to promote the repair of homes in the private sector', for its approach to group repair.

However, policies for grants to assist in improvements have been affected by changes to government policies and legislation. This has affected both grant aid and group repair and disrupted planned projects.

In 2001/02 the council embarked on a mid-term review of the scheme which aimed to assess progress of the scheme against the original objectives, to identify lessons to be learned, and to identify the way forward for the future of the regeneration area. The main text of this mid-term review is publicly available on the Southwark Council website (refer to Executive minutes of 9 September 2003), and the document itself will be published in the near future.

Who/what does the Committee seek to influence with this work?

Seeks to ensure that key lessons are learnt in relation to Bellenden Renewal for private sector renewal work and wider regeneration work across the borough.

What will the Committee's output be?

To investigate whether the Bellenden mid-term review document picks up on the key concerns and experience of Bellenden residents and traders, particularly:

- communication and consultation with the local community
- management, organisation and quality of the work
- which innovations led to success
- action which was less successful
- relative value for money on different aspects of the scheme.

To satisfy themselves that lessons that may be learnt from the scheme's implementation are integrated into private sector renewal work, and wider regeneration work across the borough.

To feed any recommendations to Overview and Scrutiny and Executive to consider.

Who does the Sub-Committee need to receive advice/evidence from?

Suggestions include:

- Officers from Housing (Private Sector Housing Unit)
- Residents and traders from Bellenden Renewal Area
- Peckham Voluntary Sector Forum
- SAVO
- Bellenden Residents' Group

What approach should the Sub-Committee use to invite input? E.g. site visit, meeting stakeholders, survey, holding meetings in relevant venues

- Site visit to the renewal area
- Background documents – including mid-term review document for Bellenden Renewal Scheme

How should the review be publicised? E.g. website, Southwark Life, via community council agendas, community groups

- Southwark Council website
- Nunhead and Peckham Rye Community Council
- Bellenden Residents' Group Newsletter (via Eileen Conn)
- Possible letter drop to residents and traders directly affected by Bellenden Renewal